Crops, Soils and Fertilizers

CONDUCTED BY B. W. KILGORE,
State Chemist North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Director Agricultural Experiment Station.

Inquiries of Progressive Farmer readers cheerfully answered.

Sowing Crimson Clover.

Editors Progressive Farmer:

As it is about time for your readers to plan for the sowing of crimson clover, I will submit a few thoughts in regard to same. I consider this a very desirable and valuable crop when sown early on good land; but is is a comparatively new crop with the people of our section of the State, and the crop last season was almost a failure in our county, and there was quite a good deal sown. I sowed about ten acres last year, mostly on cotton land as a cover crop, early in October, but as the fall was dry and the winter severe, it was all winter-killed.

I expect to sow some this month in the standing corn, also on some of my best cotton land, on freshly plowed land without covering.

Notwithstanding the very unfavorable season for crimson clover, last year a neighbor of mine made more than two tons of this crop mixed with oats. This crop was sown in September on well prepared and highly manured loamy bottom land, not subject to overflow.

This hay was worth on our market $18.00 or $20.00 per ton.

Considering the expense of the two crops, this would leave a far greater profit than the same land in cotton.

In conclusion, I would advise the sowing of crimson clover by every one who has good land and is willing to take pains in preparing the soil and sowing the seed.

JOHN M. McDOWELL.

Mecklenburg Co., N. C.

How We May Bring About Better Farming Methods.

Editors Progressive Farmer:

As I have been anticipated by Mr. Newman, in another article on farming in this part of the State, I can add but little more than to say in the common vernacular of this section, "them's my sentiments."

As I have spent the most of my life in this section, and know well the causes that have led up to these bad results, I will try and point out some remedies for the evils of this bad farming.

All this region was occupied mostly by large farms, the owners, in addition to farming, owned smith shops, mills, cotton gins wool-carding machines, and small stores. They manufactured their own tobacco, made brandy and whiskey, and owned threshing machines. As there were no railroads, a large number of teams were needed to haul off to market the produce of the large farms. The United States mails were carried by stage-coaches.

At the close of the war our country was flooded with broken-down horses, remnants of army stock. Any one who wished could pick up an old "plug." In some instances, by judicious care, these developed into good animals. Almost any one at the frequent sales could buy a set of worn out farming untensils, and gear to rig up a plow. Although this was but a poor makeshift, the farmers had to do something and rented their lands often when they knew they would be poorly cultivated. The first crop, after the war, was raised by horses fed on grass, and sassifras sprouts. The following winter and spring a large number of these horses died, and a large trade in horse bones sprang up. Among the stock there was a survival of the fittest.

The following year the price of tobacco was very high. Enough money was realized from it to enable the farmers to help out their tenants. For a few years everything went well, and there was a boom, especially in the tobacco growing interests. As the land was then in pretty good farming condition. But alas, a change came. There was a combination effected between tobacco buyers and manufacturers, the country plug factories were forced out of the trade. No one but a moneyed man could pay his tobacco taxes and continue in the trade. The humus in the soil was soon exhausted and a rapid decline in the quantity and quality of tobacco and other crops ensued, with also a rapid decline in quality and strength of the stock to cultivate the crops.

The only remedey for improving farming in this section, is a combination of the land owners. This must be done before there can be any improvement. Where there is more than one tenant on a farm who owns only one horse they should be compelled to unite their teams when breaking their lands. Or where a tenant owns a strong horse, or mule, he should first plow his land with a turning plow, then follow in the same furrow with a colter, or a bull tongue, for the first breaking. The land should be sown in clover or peas after a crop of oats, or wheat. The best portions should be broadcasted with stable or yard manure, the peas and grass saved for hay and the manure returned to the following crop. I would here like to caution all novices in the cultivation of tobacco not to put their tobacco shifts either in peas or clover, as this militates against the cultivation of fine tobacco.

To supply humus for a tobacco crop, either turn a crop of rye or wheat straw from the stock or yard, or a compost of pine straw. This should all be turned in in time for it to rot well before the tobacco is planted. This advice I give from actual experience or personal observation. With plenty of humus in the ground, and proper cultivation, one need not have much fear from the effects of tobacco wilt, watermelon blight, flea bugs, or the strawberry weevel.

Respectfully, B. F. WHITE.

What Our Farmers Lost by Insect Pests.

Editors Progressive Farmer:

Bugs are responsible for a loss of millions of dollars to our agricultural products every year. According to a report just issued by the Department of Agriculture, the destruction wrought on crops by insects and various plant diseases is slowly increasing. Potato blight last year caused injuries amounting to $10,000,000 in New York alone; and it spread with deleterious effect in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin. Corn smut caused heavy loss in Maryland, and corn leaf blight was general in Connecticut, Delaware, Eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Rice blast caused the crop in South Carolina to be 100,000 bushels short. Black rot occasioned a loss of 40 per cent to the grapes in Rhode Island and Connecticut, and Florida suffered to the same extent from cantaloupe leaf blight. Asparagus rust is seriously affecting cannon districts in the West. Tomato bacterial wilt is widespread in the South, and occasioned damage in New Jersey and Maryland. An epidemic of pear leaf blight defoliated trees from Maryland southward. Peach leaf curl seems to cause enormous destruction every year in spite of the ease of controlling it by a single spraying. The San Jose scale and codling moth are receiving much attention from economic workers, and there is a possibility of reducing the damage from these pests in the near future. The cotton boll weevil is the most important insect enemy that agriculture has to face at this time. The action of the Government in bringing colonies of ants from Gutemala to kill the weevil becomes of wider importance when it is realized that the parasite is of the same nature as the corn worm in the North. Fears are expressed, however, that the remedy may be worse than the disease. Granting that the ant destroys the weevil, we will then have to face the question, how to destroy the ant? It may prove, as in the case of the gypsy moth, and the English sparrow, to be more formidable than the evil it is intended to eradicate.

W. H. TODD.

Washington, D. C.

A Grape Press.

Editors Progressive Farmer:

It is an easy matter to construct a home-made grape press of considerable capacity, for the manufacture of home-made grape juice. Select an empty room or a corner of the porch, nail a cleat on the wall about the height of a washtub, setting the latter in front of it. Place a standard in the tub upon which the grapes can be pressed. Two heavy flat boards will act as pressers between which the bag of grapes can be placed, and the boards should of course project somewhat above the rim of the tub. Now all that is necessary is to secure a two by four lever, and insert one end under the cleat, bearing down upon the other end, or place a heavy weight thereon. Or, a ring or a box handle can be nailed into the floor and the end of the lever pulled down by a strap, thus securing a heavy pressure. G. E. M.

Alexandria, Va.

An Appeal for the State Fence Law.

Editors Progressive Farmer:

Will you kindly give me space in your valuable paper to appeal to the farmers (as well as all other classes of progressive citizens whose object is for the betterment of their communities) to select legislators pledged to give us the no-fence law for the State at large? Then if the people in any county do not want it, let them fence their county in.

If we had the no-fence law in the pine belt of the State to keep the "piney woods rooters" from destroying, by rooting up the young pines, as they do, being very fond of it for food, within ten years (with the patent box process, made of tin which is now being used South) we should have our virgin forest that would yield almost as much turpentine and by-products, as in years past, when it was one of our greatest industries.

The pine can be chipped or bled with the patent box attached when not half as large as the pine has to be with the old style of boxing. Besides, the trees will not blow down, nor can the fire destroy it so easily as if it had the saturated box, either to burn down or kill the tree. This industry alone would mean hundreds of thousands of dollars to our people—wealth that we are almost on the eve of losing entirely.

The timber required to keep up the fences around each farm, where the fence law is required, means many thousands lost to the farmers each year. The "piney woods" hog running at large is a transmitter of cholera, which means much loss to the farmers each year, and there is no chance to have improved stock unless the no-fence law is made general.

The extra time and timber (when labor is so scarce) in having to fence his own land to keep worthless stock from destroying his crop means, when summed up, a loss of at least one cent a pound on his cotton, five cents a bushel on his corn, and on other crops in proportion.

I doubt not that the extra cost of keeping up unnecessary fences with the increased valuation of timber, each year, will almost, if not quite, educate their children, or build a turnpike throughout their respective communities. Besides, we should have a better class of stock, and we should sell beef, pork and butter where we now buy to a great extent.

We would get rid of at least 50 per cent of our mysterious forest fires that destroy so much wealth each year where no other reason can be given except the tender grass for a few "piney woods" cows to feed upon, which if sold "stock and barrell" would not pay for the timber often destroyed in one year.

This question is of too much importance to be longer silent, and as I have stated in the beginning, our only remedy is the selection of capable representatives, who have more statesmanship than cunningness of the cross-road politician, whose object generally is first for self, second for party nad third for what he can make out of it.

Respectfully, D. F. KEITH.

New Hanover Co., N. C.